

Week Ending Friday, April 4, 2008

The President's Radio Address

March 29, 2008

Good morning. It's not every day that Americans look forward to hearing from the Internal Revenue Service, but over the past few weeks, many Americans have received a letter from the IRS with some good news. The letters explain that millions of individuals and families will soon be receiving tax rebates, thanks to the economic growth package that Congress passed and I signed into law last month.

Americans who are eligible for a rebate will get it automatically by simply filing their taxes. If you are not a tax filer, you should visit your local IRS office to fill out the necessary paperwork, so you can get your rebate on time.

The growth package also contains incentives for businesses to invest in new equipment this year. On Wednesday, I visited a printing company in Virginia that has decided to use these incentives to purchase new software. As more businesses begin taking advantage of these incentives, investment will pick up and so will job creation. And together with the individual tax rebates, these incentives will help give our economy a shot in the arm.

For many families, the greatest concern with the economy is the downturn in the housing market. My administration has taken action to help responsible homeowners keep their homes. In October, we helped bring together a private sector group called the HOPE NOW Alliance. HOPE NOW has helped streamline the process for refinancing and modifying mortgages, and it runs a national hotline to connect struggling homeowners with mortgage counselors.

On Friday, I visited an impressive mortgage counseling center in New Jersey. At the center, I met with homeowners who have been able to get help, thanks to HOPE NOW. One of them is Danny Cerchiaro.

Danny owns a home in New Jersey that also serves as a studio for his movie production company. When Danny and his wife learned that their adjustable-rate mortgage was resetting to a higher rate this past summer, they became concerned about their financial security. So Danny called HOPE NOW for help. Less than 2 months later, he was able to get a more affordable fixed-rate mortgage. And today, Danny calls the mortgage counselor who helped him, quote, "the magic lady."

Theresa Torres from Kansas City is another homeowner who has been helped. Theresa called HOPE NOW after she and her husband fell behind on their mortgage payments in December. A mortgage counselor helped Theresa modify her mortgage. Today, she no longer worries about losing her home.

There are hundreds of thousands of homeowners like Theresa and Danny who could benefit from calling HOPE NOW. If you're a homeowner struggling with your mortgage, please take the first step toward getting help by calling the hotline at 888-995-H-O-P-E. That's 888-995-H-O-P-E.

HOPE NOW can help homeowners find the right solution for them. One solution for some homeowners is a new program we launched at the Federal Housing Administration called FHASecure. This program has given the FHA greater flexibility to offer struggling homeowners with otherwise good credit histories a chance to refinance. So far, this program has helped more than 130,000 families refinance their mortgages, and by the end of the year, we expect this program to have reached nearly 300,000 homeowners in all.

This is a good start, and my administration is committed to building on it. So we're exploring ways this program can help more qualified home buyers. The problems in the housing market are complicated, and there is no easy solution. But by supporting responsible homeowners with wise policies, we'll help them weather a difficult period, we will

help get our economy back on track, and we will ensure America remains the most prosperous nation in the world.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:05 a.m. on March 28 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 28 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Departure for Kiev, Ukraine

March 31, 2008

Good morning. Laura and I are on our way to a very important NATO summit, and Members of the United States Congress are on their way back to Washington. And they have a lot of work to do.

Congress needs to pass FISA reform. Our intelligence professionals are waiting on the Congress to give them the tools they need to monitor terrorist communications. Congress also needs to provide liability protection to companies that may have helped save lives after September the 11th, 2001.

Congress needs to pass legislation to modernize the Federal Housing Administration. Struggling homeowners are waiting on Congress to act, so that the FHA can help more Americans refinance their mortgages and stay in their homes.

Congress needs to act urgently to approve the Colombian free trade agreement. A courageous ally in South America is waiting on Congress to approve an agreement that will strengthen our national security. American businesses, workers, and farmers are waiting on Congress to level the playing field.

These are all vital priorities. And I ask members of both parties to get these important pieces of legislation to my desk as soon as possible.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:56 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Statement on the Resignation of Alphonso R. Jackson as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

March 31, 2008

Today Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson announced his decision to leave the Department after 7 years of dedicated service. I have known Alphonso Jackson for many years, and I have known him to be a strong leader and a good man. I have accepted his resignation with regret.

Secretary Jackson is a great American success story. The youngest of 12 children—his father was a foundry worker, and his mother was a nurse midwife—Alphonso has always understood the value of hard work and equal opportunity for all Americans.

For more than three decades, he has worked to help more Americans become homeowners and strengthen communities throughout our Nation. While leading the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Alphonso made significant progress in transforming public housing, revitalizing and modernizing the Federal Housing Administration, increasing affordable housing, rebuilding the gulf coast, decreasing homelessness, and increasing minority homeownership.

Laura and I treasure our strong friendship with Secretary Jackson, his wife, Marcia, their daughters, Annette and Lesley, and their granddaughter, Lauren. We wish them all the best.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on North Atlantic Treaty Organization Enlargement

March 28, 2008

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to section 3(2)(E)(i) of the Resolution of Ratification to the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic adopted on April 30, 1998, I am pleased to submit the enclosed report on the Future Enlargement of NATO.